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SUBJECT: MEETING WITH THE MINISTER OF GENDER, SOCIAL
WELFARE AND RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS

11. (U) Summary: On February 24, CG Juba met with Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) Minister of Gender, Social Welfare and Religious Affairs (MGSW) Mary Kiden Wani, who is also one of four GoSS commissioners on the National Petroleum Commission (NPC). Wani briefly addressed the state of her ministry, including organizational challenges, and called for closer cooperation between line ministries and donors. She explained in some detail the impasse between North and South over the NPC and offered her view on the White Nile vs. Total controversy over the Super Block B petroleum concession. End summary.

Computer Without Electricity

12. (U) The Minister said that MGSW was busy organizing itself in spite of daunting logistical challenges. As an example, she pointed to a computer and printer that her daughter had sent from England to help Kiden get the ministry organized. For several days the electricity supply to her office had been off, and she was unable to access information on her computer, let alone tackle additional work. She said that the price of a generator for the building was not in her budget, and said that she hoped the situation would improve within a few days.

13. (U) Kiden said that coordination between donors and line ministries of the GoSS was of the essence. Otherwise, it would be impossible to coordinate efforts to address social welfare throughout the South. She expressed satisfaction with the participation of USAID's Lloyd Feinberg in the first half of the meeting: his input would help her coordinate the training/personnel activities of a project for disabled persons supported by USAID in Rumbek with a larger project of the same nature run by ICRC in Juba. She observed that a number of donors were enthusiastic about gender initiatives, but that a number of them were also running programs about which the ministry was largely in the dark.

Struggle Within the NPC

14. (SBU) Kiden said that the NPC was at a standstill after two unsuccessful tries to agree on modalities, and she did not know when the Government of National Unity (GNU) would call the southern commissioners to Khartoum for a third try. She said that unresolved issues were the fault of the North, which continued to attempt to force the GoSS to accept the GNU Ministry of Energy and Mining as the de facto executive arm of the NPC.

15. (SBU) Kiden said that President Bashir had attempted

to use his visit to the South to convince Salva Kiir to co-sponsor a series of presidential decrees on the NPC that would have effectively turned that body into a rubber stamp for GNU Energy Minister El Jaz. The first granted Bashir the right to dismiss commissioners at his pleasure, and the second set a quorum of six, which meant that the NPC could legally meet and take decisions by assembling Bashir, the four northern commissioners and Salva Kiir whenever Kiir happened to be in Khartoum. For his part, Kiir had refused to agree and insisted that the entire commission further discuss the issues.

¶6. (SBU) Kiden said that the GoSS wanted a body with equal representation from both sides to examine marketing, production figures, etc. to act as the NPC's executive arm, in keeping with the spirit of the CPA. CG observed that there were provisions within the CPA, such as the Assessment and Evaluation Commission (AEC), to which contentions could presumably be addressed. Kiden said that the GoSS intended to use that channel.

White Nile Vs. Total

¶7. (SBU) Kiden confirmed that any decision on the partition of Super Block B remained on hold. She described past action by the French government and French companies that had helped the North in its attempt to subjugate the South, but said that she wanted the case to be decided on its merits and the basis of law (Note: Kiden has reportedly supported WNL in the past. End note.) She complained that she remained uninformed on many details - neither WNL nor Total had sought to meet with her to describe their proposals and answer her

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questions. CG agreed that the essential point was to make a decision based on the facts and proper legal interpretation, to include relevant portions of the CPA. Above all, a transparent process was essential.

Comment

¶8. (SBU) Kiden commented that the GoSS failure to claim the GNU energy ministry had been a fatal mistake. Kiir's decision to yield on this point has probably been his worst mistake in the eyes of many southerners.

Bio Data

¶9. (SBU) There is currently limited information on Minister Kiden Wani, also known as Kiden Wari. She spent considerable time in London and some period in Nairobi during the war. She ran the UK-registered NGO Southern Sudan Women Concern, a group active in Kajo Keji County with female heads of household, particularly those widowed by the war. Kiden is from Equatoria, ethnic affiliation unknown. She is a vocal proponent of entrepreneurship among women. Her ministry is the most organized and businesslike CG Juba officials have seen: office staff always present during business hours, and meetings are scheduled and conducted on a professional basis.

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